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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/13/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [EG](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: ISRAELIS ACCEPT 750 EGYPTIAN BORDER GUARDS AT
RAFAH BUT NOT MORE

REF: CAIRO 2172

Classified By: Ambassador Richard H. Jones, Reason 1.4 (b) (d)

11. (C) DATT followed up with IDF Planning Division Chief MG Udi Dekel July 12 regarding Embassy Cairo reftel report that Israel had refused the deployment of additional Egyptian border guards along the Egypt-Gaza border. Dekel told DATT that, as we have previously reported, Israel has no objection to the deployment of the full contingent of 750 border guards within the Rafah zone in accordance with the 2005 Egyptian-Israeli border guards agreement. Dekel confirmed, however, that Israel will not agree to the deployment of additional border guards, noting that there had been no change in Israel's position on this point. Dekel told DATT that the Israelis agreed to most other Egyptian suggestions raised at the July 10 JMC. Dekel said the Israelis had been surprised by a change in Egypt's position on reopening the Rafah crossing. According to him, the Egyptian military delegation at the JMC had said Egypt now wants to reopen the crossing; Israel remains opposed to reopening Rafah at this time.

12. (C) A source with access to the joint protocol released at the end of the JMC told PolCouns that the protocol reaffirmed the sides' agreement to the deployment of 750 border guards in the Rafah zone. He was not privy to the discussions during the JMC, but agreed that Israel would not agree to the deployment of about 2,000 Egyptian border guards in Zone C in order to support the deployment of 750 in the Rafah zone. He speculated that differences in the way Israel and Egypt deploy troops was part of the failure to reach agreement on this point. The source said the overall tone of the JMC was positive. Besides the agreement reported in reftel on Egyptian radars and border guard headquarters buildings, the sides also agreed on the establishment of a hotline between the IDF Gaza brigade commander and the Egyptian border guard commander, as well as on periodic commanders' meetings in addition to the semi-annual JMC.

13. Ambassador confirmed Dekel's information in a July 13 conversation with MOD Pol-Mil Director Amos Gilad. Gilad said that Israel had rejected the proposal for a larger Border Guard force. "We can't destroy an agreement based on the blood of thousands," he added. Another reason cited for rejecting the request was the continuing presence of the Central Security police in the "zone." According to Gilad, this force was supposed to have been removed as the Border Guards were introduced but this never happened and Israel had turned a blind eye to the violation at his recommendation. The continuing presence of the police meant that the Egyptians already have twice the number in the zone than allowed by their bilateral agreement. Gilad claimed that this demonstrated that the problem was not the lack of people but rather the lack of Egyptian will to act on intelligence information to put the squeeze on known smugglers. On the

other hand, Gilad reiterated that Israel wants the Border Guards that are allowed to be "deployed with full force." "They can have all 750 of them on the border if they want," he said.

14. (C) Gilad also confirmed that the Egyptians had raised opening the Rafah crossing. This was in spite of the "very detailed" agreement that had previously been reached to repatriate the 6,000 stranded Palestinians via Kerem Shalom. Although Gilad said that he had thought Israel might respond positively to the request, in fact, he reported that Defense Minister Barak had personally vetoed it for four reasons: (1) a deal is a deal; (2) it would be a bad precedent to re-open Rafah (which could be seen as a reward for Hamas's coup); (3) there are many bad guys among the 6,000; they need to be carefully screened on the way in; (4) Hamas will be in charge on the other side of the crossing (de facto recognition of a terror organization). Gilad interpreted the Egyptian proposal darkly as a clear change in Egyptian policy toward Hamas. Nonetheless, he said that the GOI would continue to consult with them on the issue.

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JONES